HEART TO HEART:
A MESSAGE FROM THE PASTOR
EPHESIANS 4.11-16

This morning I want to step outside of the norm and speak to you, not only as pastor, but also as friend and brother in Christ.

As all good preachers do, I have a text and a message that is based on what "thus saith the Lord," but I also want to speak to you from my heart.

Testimony and calling.

Let's begin by looking into God's word. ***Eph. 4.11-16***

There are five offices listed in this verse, but only two of them apply to me.

I am neither an apostle nor a prophet. I am an evangelist, of a sort, in that I am a messenger of the good news of the Gospel of Christ. But evangelists typically are those who travel from place to place to preach, whereas a pastor generally stays in one place for an extended period.

I am more a preacher and teacher, so I will only speak to these points this morning.

Notice first of all that preachers and teachers do not arise from a desire on the part of a person to a profession. Verse 8 ends by saying that God gave gifts unto men. There is a parenthetical statement in ***verses 9-10*** where Paul explains what he meant by the word "ascended" in ***verse 8***.

Then in ***verse 11***, he continues his thoughts about the gifts of God. Among these gifts are preachers and teachers.

- ***Romans 1.6*** says that we are all called by God, even as Paul was called to be an apostle.
- ***Romans 8.28*** says that we are called according to His purposes.

- **1 Cor. 12.7, 11** say that every Christian is gifted by the Holy Spirit according to His own will for the benefit of the church as a whole.
- ***1 Cor. 12.27-28*** say that each Christian is a member of the body of Christ and that God himself has placed each of us in the body where He wants us placed.

That is a very clear picture of what the church looks like and how the church is meant to operate.

We are the body of Christ. We stand in for Christ before the world just as Ananias stood in for Christ in revealing the plans Christ had for Saul in last week's sermon.

Preachers and teachers are the gift of God, placed in the church according to the design of God, not by the design or the desires of men.

Why did God see the need for pastors and teachers?

Verse 11 and the beginning of ***verse 12*** tell us that God gave the gift of pastors and teachers for the purpose of **equipping** the saints (saved) for the work of ministry. The pastor is responsible for ministry because he is a Christian. But in the church, his primary task is to equip the saints. It is the primary task of the membership to do the ministry.

A pastor might go out on his own and share the gospel message with ten people in a week. But if he obeys the Great Commission and makes disciples of the members – meaning he reproduces himself in each of the members – then 50 members should then be able to go out and share the gospel message with 500 people in a week.

That is the way Jesus worked. He did not try to convert the world. He spent three years training just 12 apostles as well as several other disciples. On the day of Pentecost, when the church was born, there were only 120 disciples in the room in spite the fact that Jesus had ministered among the people for three years.

I remind you of something else that happened to Jesus.

At the end of His life on earth, when the going got tough on that Thursday night of the week of Passover, what happened to all of those who claimed to be Jesus' disciples? All but John either betrayed Him, denied Him, or abandoned Him.

Secondly, pastors and teachers are responsible for **edifying** the body of Christ (***verse 12b***).

Edifying means "building up" the body of Christ. It means the pastor and those who teach in the church are to be about the business of promoting growth among the members "in Christian wisdom, piety, happiness, holiness." This is the meaning of edifying.

Thirdly, pastors and teachers are to be about the business of **educating** the members of the church until they attain to the "unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God." (***verse 13a***)

Notice that the goal is not unity of the body as a body. It is not the primary responsibility of the pastor to keep the peace and to insure unity of the body. The Bible says in Col. 1.17 that it is by Christ that all things consist or are held together.

The function of the pastor and teachers is to teach the truth until the members reach a unity of faith and knowledge of the head of the body, Jesus Christ.

The pastor is to teach Christ and Him crucified and resurrected, ascended to the Father to make intercession for the saints, to act as our mediator, and of His coming again in glory when the Father says it is time.

The pastor is to continue this labor of teaching until each of the members of the body has attained "the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ." (***verse 13b***) In other words, until everyone looks like Jesus (***Rom. 8.29***).

When that begins to happen – when the members begin to look more like Jesus and to act like Jesus and to love like Jesus – then the natural by-product will be unity in the body…

…because once the members have become like Christ (look at ***verse 14***) they will "no longer be children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, in the cunning craftiness of deceitful plotting."

If a pastor is faithful to his call to make disciples,

- the members will become more than immature infants who require "the milk of the word" and can move on to more challenging doctrines
- the members will be strongly anchored in the truth of Scripture so that they are not blown off course by those whose doctrine is in error or is incomplete
- the members will not be tempted to become involved in "deceitful plotting" – meeting behind closed doors or in church corners or parking lots, on Facebook or in emails or texting about how they are dissatisfied with the way things are going.

Someone who is disciple of Christ will not have time for these things. They will be too busy studying and praying and sharing the gospel with lost people and caring for other members and taking care of the needs of the poor to spend their time trying to figure out how to get rid of the pastor.

Finally, the pastor is to be about the business of **exhorting**.

Verse 15 says that he is to "speak the truth in love."

One thing you don't need is my opinion. My opinion and your opinion about what is true has no more meaning and is no more effective than spitting into a volcano.

But the truth of God is powerful beyond all our comprehension.

Heb. 4:12 For the word of God is living and active and sharper than any two-edged sword, and piercing as far as the division of soul and spirit, of both joints and marrow, and able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart.

And as far as God empowers me to do so and gives me a platform from which to do it, I am going to preach the truth of God. I am going to teach the word of God, and I am going to preach all of the word of God.

I am not going to skip over a part of it because someone is offended by it or because someone disagrees with it or someone wishes I would ignore it.

To do so would violate my calling as a minister of the Gospel.

1 Cor. 9:16 ***…preaching the Good News is not something I can boast about. I am compelled by God to do it. How terrible for me if I didn't preach the Good News!*** ***17*** ***…I have no choice, for God has given me this sacred trust.***

So, as Paul instructed his disciple Timothy, I am going to…

2 Tim. 4:2 ***…preach the word; be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort, with great patience and instruction.*** (NAS)

Of course, every sermon, every teaching of truth or exhortation of heart must be rendered in truth or it is relatively ineffective.

The truth is never to be sacrificed for the cause of love, but without love, the truth will seldom be heard.

"He has done about half his work in convincing another of error, who has first convinced him that he loves him."

I know that some of you may struggle with whether your pastor loves you or not, but I assure that I do. Ms. Ann and I grow more in love with you every day. And we cherish the love that you have expressed toward us.

It is the responsibility and calling of a pastor to continue to do his best to proclaim the truth of the word of God until the whole church is grown into the image of Christ…

…until each member of the body understands their role in the body, until each part is working properly, and the body grows "so that it builds itself up in love." (***verse 16***)

This is how God intends for His church to function. This is the role of the pastor.

I want you to know that I am not in the church-building business. I am in the disciple-making business.

If there is anything that the Bible makes clear, it is that Christ is the builder of the church.

Following the confession of Peter and the other disciples in ***Matthew 16*** that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God, Jesus says to Peter in ***verse 18***…

Matt. 16:18 ***And I also say to you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build My church, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it.***

One of the things we learned again in our Bible studies this week was that God has as His desire that His church be holy.

Eph. 1.3-4

Eph. 5.25b-27

Col. 1.21-22

What is the meaning of holiness? In a Barna survey, 21% (1 out of 5) Christians answered, "I do not know."

The word literally means "to separate or to set apart." We have been separated from unrighteousness and set apart to good works.

David Platt: "God blesses His people with extravagant grace so they might extend His extravagant glory to all peoples on earth."

Titus 2:14 ***who gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from every lawless deed and purify for Himself His own special people*** (extravagant grace), ***zealous for good works*** (extravagant glory).

1 Peter 2:9 ***But you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people*** (extravagant grace), ***that you may proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light*** (extravagant glory).

God created man in His image, and then placed him in the Garden of Eden – a perfect man in a perfect environment in personal contact with the perfect Lord of Creation. All of that happened because of the extravagant grace of God.

God created them – male and female – and placed them in the Garden. Then God gave them his first commandment: "Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth." God gave his people his image…so that they might multiply his image – His extravagant glory – throughout the world.

We think that having children is for our own glory and to carry on the traditions of our name. But the original call to bear children was to fill the earth with God-like men for the glory of God.

It has been the desire of my heart that we would impact out community and our world for Christ.

The formal definition of *impact* is "a forcible contact between two things," and God has designed our lives for a collision course with the world.

David Platt: God has created us to accomplish a radically global, supremely God-exalting purpose with our lives.

But we cannot impact our world if we are continuously on a collision course with ourselves.

BLAMELESS & HOLY